Sirhan Denial Of 1st-Degree Count Pushed

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LOS ANGELES, April 11—The smooth, sincere voice rang through the courtroom.

"We could admit," attorney Grant B. Cooper said of his client, "that he bought the gun with the intention of killing Sen. Kennedy or President Johnson or Ambassador Goldberg or any of those people.

"We could admit that he did it because he was angry at this country for aid to Israel.

"We could admit that he went to the Ambassador Hotel on June 2 for the purpose of 'casing the joint.'

"We could admit he made inquiries as to what the route was and how many bodyguards Sen. Kennedy had."

All this and more, the lawyer maintained, could be conceded, and Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy last June 5 would still not add up to first-degree murder.

It was a stunning summation with Cooper seeming to give up everything but giving up nothing.

Sirhan claims to have blacked out when he fired a bullet into the Democratic presidential candidate's brain, but even that, his chief defense counsel acknowledged, might be pure fiction.

"I don't care whether he was in a trance or not," Cooper declared. "This is beside the point."

Sirhan's premeditation of the killing went back to at least May 18 and perhaps even earlier, the silver-haired defense lawyer said, putting all his bets on a single theme.

"The question is whether (Sirhan) could maturely and meaningfully premeditate."

Those two words, "maturely" and "meaningfully," and what they mean to the jury, loomed today as the keys to the outcome of Sirhan's marathon trial.

Psychotic or not, Cooper contended, the 25-year-old defendant "became unglued when he shot Sen. Kennedy." And psychotic or not, he argued, Sirhan surely was incapable of the mature and meaningful thought that California law demands the underpinning for any conviction for first-degree murder.

Far from that, Cooper thundered, Sirhan thought the assassination "would start World War III. He thought it would send this Nation into anarchy.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the little Palestinian's attorney said incredulously, "is that the thinking of a mature, healthy mind?"

The prosecution will have the last word. The case is expected to go to the jurors on Monday.